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ABSTRACT

A list of suggestions for the content-area teacher dealing with limited-English-proficient students is designed to help increase the comprehensible input provided to the students. A brief introductory section reviews theory underlying the approach. Subsequently, nine lists outline specific classroom activities (speaking/listening), teacher behaviors, instructional material choices, audiovisual aids, features of the classroom environment, presentation techniques, interaction patterns, reading and writing instructional methods, study skills, evaluation techniques, test modifications, and testing techniques for teachers to use. Contains nine references. (MSE)

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Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for Limited English Proficient Students in the Content Area Classroom

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Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for
Limited English Proficient Students
in the Content Area Classroom
(Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.)

ESL students are a diverse group of learners with language, economic, cultural, and learning differences. And like most students, they benefit from a variety of metacognitive and instructional strategies to make content more comprehensible. At the same time, content area teachers struggle with the task of presenting difficult concepts to ESL students who must confront linguistic difficulties on a daily basis. Furthermore, textbooks create comprehension nightmares for many English-only students, let alone Limited English Proficient (LEP) students. The resounding question for many content teachers becomes, "What can I possibly do to teach ESL students with tremendous linguistic and academic needs the academic content in math, science, social studies, and other content areas?"

Certainly, there are no band-aid solutions. So, after much thought the need for a "user friendly" list of suggestions was created and field tested with student teachers, new ESL instructors, and seasoned content teachers alike. After several revisions and feedback from teachers, such an instrument proved to be highly effective particularly with: 1.) Content Area teachers from all disciplines, 2.) Bilingual / ESL teachers , 3.) Content Area and ESL teachers in collaborative efforts, and 4.) ESL teachers in pull-out programs.

This list of suggestions for the content-area teacher reflects Krashen and Terrell's (1983) definition of "comprehensible input," from their transformational work, *The Natural Approach*, which changed the direction of second language acquisition theory in ESL and Foreign Language classrooms. One of their assumptions, the Input Hypothesis, addresses how we acquire language. Krashen (1992, p. 4) writes, "We

acquire language in one way: when we understand messages, or obtain comprehensible input . . . . We acquire language . . . when we understand what we hear or what we read, when we understand the message." Thus, "comprehensible input" involves numerous modifications and teaching strategies to make learning discernible.

Furthermore, this list has been designed to foster suggestions for teachers who could not enroll immediately in courses or attend workshops on successful ESL program models such as: Integrated Language Teaching (McCloskey, 1986), Sheltered English Teaching (Northcutt & Watson, 1986), and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach or the CALLA (Chamot and O'Malley, 1994). However, this "user friendly" list places emphasis on many of the same instructional practices employed used in successful ESL models such as: realia, visuals, media, body language, grouping, learning, metacognitive, and process strategies. Other influences include: Whole Language (Goodman & Goodman), Process Writing (Elbow, Murray, Emig), Cooperative Learning (Johnson & Johnson), Content Mastery, Study Skills, and Metacognitive strategies.

Until the day comes when teachers receive the training to work more effectively with LEP students, a "user-friendly" list of suggestions may help in the interim to stimulate thinking about how to simplify comprehensible input. This instrument is not meant to be comprehensive, only representative. Feel free to add or subtract as needed.

Suggestions for Comprehensible Input for Limited English Proficient Students (LEP) in the Content Area Classroom

(Katherine P. McFarland, Ph.D.)

I. **Speaking / Listening Activities** - Provides time and adequate delivery for LEP students to receive comprehensible input.

____ Enunciate and Pronounce Words Correctly
____ Control Vocabulary and Sentence Length
____ Limit Use of Idiomatic Expressions
____ Use Fewer Pronouns
____ Restate to Clarify if Problem in Comprehension Arises
____ Use Pauses Between Phrases
____ Use Repetition; Restatements; Examples
____ Use Review in Beginning / Middle / End of Activity
____ Use Recorded Tapes at Listening Stations
____ Tape Key Mini-Lectures for Listening Stations
____ Provide Listening and Speaking Games
____ List Key Concepts on Overhead during Discussions
____ Provide the ESL Teacher with Content Vocabulary

II. **Contextual Clues** - Provides clues to clarify the meanings of new words and ideas to aid in the visual impact of information.

____ Provide Gestures / Facial Expressions
____ Use Kinesthetic / Body Language for Emphasis
____ Teach with Props / Realia
____ Use Texts with Visuals
____ Provide Graphics / Visuals / Illustrations
____ Use Overheads / Transparencies
____ Supply Geographic Maps
____ Use Pictorial Models
____ Reinforce with Use of Media / Video / Slides
____ Apply Manipulatives to Lesson
____ Provide Classroom Labels to Equipment
____ Have Students Practice with Flash Cards
____ Create Bulletin Boards to Reinforce Units
____ Schedule Field Trips

III. **Organizers** - Provides opportunities for students to graphically represent difficult academic content to be stored in long term memory .

____ Use Visual Representations of Content
____ Use Webbing / Clustering / Mapping Devices
____ Outline Main Ideas using Graphic Organizers
____ Sort / Categorize / Group Information Graphically
____ Use Venn Diagram for Comparison and Contrast

____ Apply Who / What / Where / When / Why Formula
____ Use K / W / L - What you know / What you want to know / What you learn.
____ Incorporate Study Guides for Chapters
____ Preview Vocabulary Terminology
____ Have Students Create Margin Notes
____ Model Methods of Outlining and Notetaking
____ Have Student Model Notes on Overhead
____ Provide Acronyms and Pneumonic Devices
____ Teach Color Coding to Organize Information

IV. **Classroom Strategies** - Provides active learning opportunities that have proven to be successful.

____ Orchestrate Peer Tutoring Opportunities
____ Utilize Cross-Age Tutoring
____ Model What is Expected and Provide Examples
____ Experiment with Various Cooperative Learning Strategies
____ Coordinate Activities that Involve Working in Pairs
____ Design Pair / Share Activities
____ Arrange Team Projects / Joint Projects
____ Create Learning Centers
____ Provide Manipulatives / Hands-On Experiences
____ Reinforce a Variety of Learning Styles
____ Reinforce Multiple Intelligence
____ Emphasize Drama and Pantomime for Classroom Activities
____ Provide Time for Role Playing and Student Dialogues
____ Arrange Weekly Conferences for Goal Setting and Follow-up
____ Integrate Songs, Chants, and Choral Readings

V. **Reading / Writing Strategies** - Provides active methods to comprehend difficult content material through literacy.

____ Brief the Students on Key Points in Beginning of Lesson
____ Preview Text or Unit
____ Tap or Create Background Knowledge Needed
____ Provide Course Outline or Overview
____ Use Supplementary Materials on Multiple Levels
____ Simplify the Reading Materials
____ Set-up Purposes Prior to Readings
____ Grade without Emphasis on Grammar and Spelling
____ Give More Time for Students to Complete Assignments
____ Reduce the Length of Required Assignments
____ Use Thematic Units
____ Chart Progress through Portfolio in Reading and Writing
____ Provide Reinforcements for Concepts (Hints, Cue Cards, Visuals)
____ Use Computer Software (Word Processing, Spelling, Thesaurus)
____ Allow Alternatives to Oral Presentations
____ Allow Students to Give Responses in Native Language
____ Use Talk-Write-Compute Formula

____ Create Pair / Share Reading Opportunities
____ Create Stories through the Language Experience Approach
____ Have Student Use Own Experiences for Topics in Writing
____ Stress Authentic Writing Opportunities
____ Reinforce Stages in Process Writing
____ Have Students Paraphrase Content through Writing
____ Have Students Make Vocabulary Cards with Pictures
____ Have Students Create Language / Content Games (Password)

VI. **Study Skills** - Creates metacognitive strategies to be used to extract important information.

____ Use Focus Questions to Highlight Important Information for Students
____ Model Outlining and Notetaking Strategies
____ Present Alternatives to Outlining - Webbing and Mapping
____ Reinforce Active Methods of Extracting Info from Texts - Highlighting
____ Ask Students to Create Graphic Representations of Content
____ Have Students Write One Page Summaries
____ Preview Questions
____ Teach Skimming and Scanning Techniques
____ Ask Students to Create Word / Vocabulary Banks
____ Teach Reading Formulas - Survey/Scan/Read/Recall/Review
____ Provide Study Guide for Test Preparation
____ Emphasize Meaning of Key Words in Essay Questions
____ Audiotape Lessons
____ Encourage Students to Use Bilingual Dictionary
____ Have Fluent English Speaker Take Notes on Carbon Paper

VII. **Evaluation** - Provides alternatives for grading and tracking progress of LEP student.

____ Create Anecdotal Records of Progress
____ Hold Individual Conferences
____ Show Holistic Scoring Rubric in Advance of Assignment
____ Develop Checklists in Content
____ Arrange Partner / Group Scores
____ Offer a Contract System for Grading
____ Portfolio Assessment
____ Daily and / or Weekly Grades
____ Reinforce Self Evaluation

VIII. **Test Modifications** - Provides methods to evaluate LEP students' understanding of content knowledge.

____ Open Book Exams
____ Allow ExtraTime for Regular Exams
____ Give Oral Exam vs. Written Exam
____ Let Student Record Answers on Tape
____ Read Test Items to Student

____ Write down Test Responses for Students
____ Give Test to Small Group of Students
____ Allow Student to Make Questions for Test
____ Give Take-Home Exams
____ Substitute an Assignment for Test
____ Provide List of Test Responses for Student to Choose (Multiple Choice)
____ Allow Student to Demonstrate Competency by Performance
____ Teach Test-Taking Strategies
____ Teach Test-Taking Strategies for Essay
____ Address Essay Verbs - Describe, Retell, Compare / Contrast
____ Limit the Student's Choices on Multiple-Choice Tests.

IX. General Advice - Prepares teachers to work with multi-level LEP students.

____ Maintain a Library of Supplementary Books and Workbooks
____ Maintain a Variety of Reference Materials at Multiple Levels
____ Keep a Variety of Instructional Games
____ Maintain a Computer Lab with Educational Software.
____ Emphasize Accuracy Not Speed
____ Provide Materials that are High Interest / Meaningful / Relevant.
____ Provide Materials that Emphasize Culture without Stereotyping
____ Provide Biographies of Significant Men & Women from Different Cultures
____ Find a Variety of Classroom Activities and Learning Styles.
____ Redesign Classroom for Variety of Needs - Individual, Small Group Areas, Quiet Zone, Well-Lit Reading Area, Typing/Computer Center)
____ Provide Students a Choice of Materials and Activities
____ Keep Error Corrections to a Minimum

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